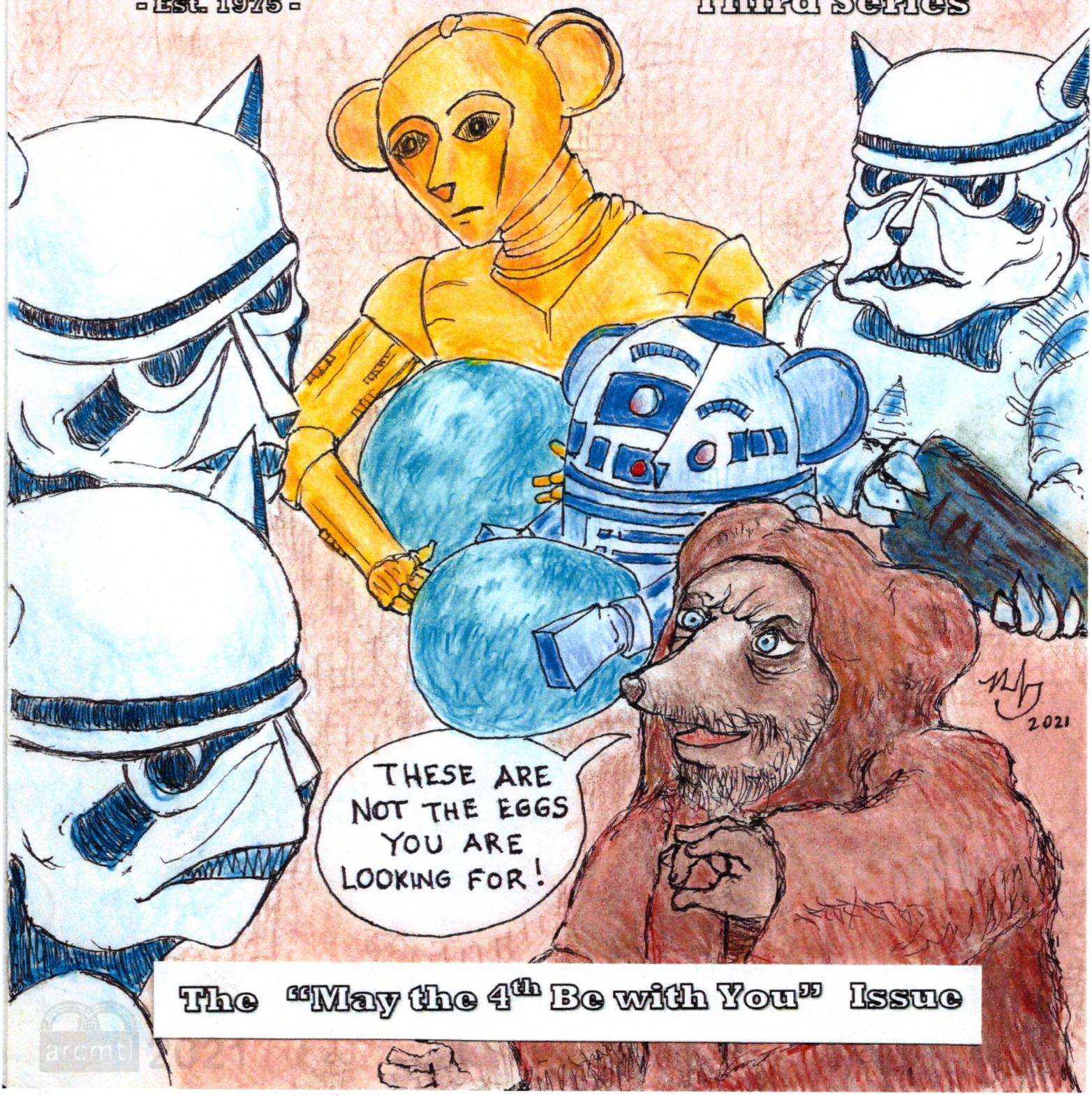
3 Dozen

MOUSE EGGS

- Est. 1975 -

Third Series



The "May the 4th Be with You" Issue

arcmtl

3 DOZEN MOUSE EGGS

MAY 2021

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NOAH ZACHARIN

WHAT THEN OF ART

from where
the oils, how much
from the eye, how much
from the spleen under saturn's sway
squeezing out a melancholy bile?
and what of the heart, what of the heart?
not a dancer, I marvel
at how pure an art can be.
in grains of silver, sepia
blooms an elegant and formal pose.
a cramped arm hoists a 459 page albatross.
vintner blows on a clutch of his favoured cultivar
before sending them all off to the ferment.
I personally have played
many notes and sent them
ghosting away, hastening the sunset. how my hands
ache now for the art, my senses thinly fed
like a patient in palliative
given nothing but electrolytes and brahms.
in the pond,
life proceeds: the peepers
newly thawed,
insist on it.
the western sky
rejects similes like

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bloody rags, flayed torsos, orange skirt
of *the one* seen only once and then
seen every day after
until kaddish and a weighted blanket of dirt.
what then of the art
under a firmament so dark one would expect
no moon to show and no sun
ever to rise again.
where is the art in that?
fist to the temple,
black throb at the heart
of a lofty rothko.
here:
its one or two
stars
might be stars.
might equally be
nothing
but moments
of inattention,
simple
mistakes.

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DAPHNE MARLATT

ENTRANCE TO WHAT

early Portuguese spice traders knew as Pulo Pinaom north of
Malacca Strait's monsoon shelter trade route Moluccas to Madras
or Pulau Ka-sathu First Island to the sea-sakai or Isle of Areca/
betel nut palm under the mainland's Kedah sultanate trade
rivalries meant its Tanjong Penaga stand of coastal laurel trees
met Sir Frances Light's costly goldcoin cannon shot luring
underpaid Indian sepoys and lascars to cut dense hardwood clear
rainforest jungle growth for Fort Cornwallis that British East
India Company outpost then Prince of Wales Island a town
rapidly growing Hokkien-Malay-Tamil-Euro entrepôt trade rival
Malacca's but George yes George Town's shallow harbour hosting
high-prowed junks triple-masted Indiamen sail wind sail as sampans
unloaded to ghauts coolie labour hauled up merchant wares for go-downs
and finance houses West to East East to West now Malaysian Pulau
Pinang's long-gone betel nut stands ghost under so-called Silicon
Valley of the East's Internet of Things yes "things"

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DAPHNE MARLATT

STILL

turmeric & coconut cooking aromas turn on this rusty
tap of the past drip odd clear drops Amah slap-slapping
from room to room no Cantonese "black and white" in
black pants & white *samfu* but batik sarong & shirt
long Thai hair pulled into black & grey bun Amah
scaring us out of her domain kitchen cleaver raised
telling us all of her children died Amah loving us like
one of her own quietly contravening Mem's discipline
Amah teaching Kuan Im compassion through the smile
in her voice Amah laughing uproarious Amah's time-off
smoking a beedi

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DAPHNE MARLATT

ARMS ALARMS

We are not supposed to be particularly good riflemen now that we are so preoccupied with machine guns, but it is up to us to compete with the Asiatic boys, who are not machine gunners. We got an extraordinary notice round this morning giving us orders what to do on the proclamation of a Precautionary Warning – where to report, suggestions as to what to do with wives, children, jewelry, furniture etc. & finishing up by pointing out that any delay, occasioned by not taking these hints, would "not be tolerated in the event of a general mobilization." I don't know whether there is any particular object in all this, or whether the instructions are merely of a general nature. The position in China looks serious in the extreme (I hope it will have sorted itself out peacefully by the time you are reading this, but I fear there can be no lasting settlement) but I cannot imagine that it would affect us here with any suddenness.

The prestige of Britain in the Far East now stands at a discount – we missed our chance in stopping (or failing to stop) Japan's entry into Manchuria. At that time we should have accepted the offer of collaboration with [the] U.S. We turned it down – chiefly because popular opinion at home had this wretched "isolationist" policy drummed into it. The result now is that Japan is the dominant power unless we care to combine with Russia – wouldn't the yellow press at home howl if we suggested doing so?

June 11th 1936

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DAPHNE MARLATT

here a crowd of crows
caw-caw incessant
insane warning at
the bandit-eyed raccoon
prowling a neighbour's roof

as if that were the only alarm
to be raised these days of
history intensified

oil wars, drought, & famine
fished-out parts of ocean
coral die-off, Arctic thaw

Australia burning

will strident crow-gang cries
outlast us?

(only if trees do)

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LATE NIGHT TV

the font was small
that out of the corner of my eye
I read "book of burials."
fine title for a book, I thought,
one that one could go to
time, time again.
I wondered: should the plates focus
on the mourned or the mourning;
on the body, box, or pit?
details! this will make a fine coffee table book!
minimal text,
wry or wise last words,
spectrograms of a mother's keening.
a few brown and grey lines
from the realist poet,
other more scarlet, other more blue
from the romantic
lost in loss.
the makings of something fine!
likely the cover should be
oak laminate, but let the publishers
concern themselves with details. me?
I'm the concepts guy, the
big-picture guy,

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NOAH ZACHARIN

lightbulb-above-the-head guy
seeing working machines
in scrap metal and refracted light.
still, at the meeting, I'll suggest
having the volume bound
with sinew,
and providing
with each numbered copy
(unlimited edition)
a phial of tears:
we'll want
to offer
something
unique.
like
as seen
on TV.

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POSTCARD HOME #2

sorry I haven't written sooner.
never thought things would get
this bad, even as it grew
small and filled with
shrunken heads, narrowing perimeters,
narcotic pin-holes through which
to view a total eclipse.
thought glacial moments from the past
would keep me standing mute, owl-eyed,
unburned and isolated
from all but the orange tongues' talk.
I never thought
you'd want to hear this. apologies
for not being more optimistic at the outset.
apologies, now the pupil of fire widens,
for ash on my forehead.
so,
how are things in heaven?
here they are
very bad.
we think.
we do not know.
but I do know we never thought
it would get this bad. what I can say is this:
your son has fallen into a life

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no one needs to know about.
too small too dark too small.
it would be nice
to hear a good word or two. tell me,
is the fruit there
as good as they say it is,
and have you been reunited
with your dear
david, dad:
by the tree,
by the river,
in your new garden?

love,
the lost son

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NOAH ZACHARIN

THE PERFUME AND THE SONG

as she pours from glass
bottle to glass. sober
seven months, 22:18,
all details are significant.
from the galil,
dry red,
syrah…
has me
imagining dust and tannins,
goat bells and wind,
voice of someone I loved and love. all this
permitted now to spill
down my throat
like a brilliant sonnet
returning to its moment of inspiration.
daylight cedes to sunset, leading
to the infinite map
of stars, planets,
moon on black:
as long as I can keep from falling
into thrall of it and my eyes remain
green; so long as I
do not freeze to the spot,
I may enjoy this dram, this dream.

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all the voices, all the skies, now
the cork removed,
all the perfume, all the song,
as she pours into the first glass
with the sound
of an excited child
trying to tell the entire story
of the entire day—
in a single gulp.

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THE POET & THE CROWD

After Pushkin

I fling the alphabet
to reach the semblance of a crowd
I pretend into existence
only to hear their questions rocket back.
"What's the meaning of your song?
Free as the wind but where's the gain?"

Another poet long ago –
before he was shot in a lovers' duel –
dispatched his throng
with scorn: *Away with you*
you mindless crew! Dear Pushkin
why defame a mob of your creation?

Poems can't stop wars or lovers' quarrels
and Lord knows there is no monetary gain in songs
of harmony and prayer. Nor is there choice.
I can't deny the impulse to create them.
My longing voice, my keyboard
make a noise as profane as the wind.

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UNBEKNOWNST IN A GATHERING

atheists & acid jazzers
band aid wearers
chin-hair tweezers
dieters & Dadaists
exorcists & enchanters
flimflammers
Game-boy players
hedonists
I-Ching tossers
jaded lovers
knock-knock jokers
lighthouse keepers
midnight tokers & metalheads
numbers chanters
ova donors
philosophers & perjurers
quirky quacks & quarantine breakers
Rasputins & refusers
scatterbrains
tattoo artists
underminers
voodooists & vaccinators
washing fiends
Xanax-takers
yentas
zealots & zeitgeist-makers

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20/20

It's a terrible life. That's what they keep telling me.
Maybe you have to stop believing
what people tell you.

Start again. A sailboat never ever made me feel unhappy.
Even the one that was destroyed by a cyclone showed me
a good time before its demise. And then there's people, friends.
They disappoint me all the time. Very few of them
don't, and come across as rare exceptions. Jesus probably
wouldn't. Disappoint me. It would all depend
on whether he could actually raise the dead.

Actions, not words.
Even *I* have pretty words sometimes.

People tell me
I'm a lucky guy, or maybe it's that
I'm the life of the party. One of those
may be true. I was a capable deckhand
on a sailboat, and in that I take some actual pride.
The rest of the time I'm busy reading Shakespeare, for helpful hints
about how to live life in a tragic time.

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MANGO STICKY RICE

We always allowed him to describe
the extent of the loss. The coconut cream
of it all eludes him now. The pull
of the sticky rice, fragrant sweetness
of the mango. He lost himself on trains
for months, and now he misses her
in the softest moments. Who calls anything
love? The bright rainbows arcing above
after the falling of warm rain. The beloved dessert
after the yellow curry. Thai food trucks
drive through the night, trying to find roads
to Thailand. He's stuck on a beautiful island
in mid-Pacific like a prisoner of war.
He can't get back to her eyes.

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MARGARITA

She wrote a long letter
on a short sheet of paper.

Interiority.

Do the dead want company?

Tala mala sheela jaipur dhoop.

Late one night
I lost my hat.

Lost it deep in the shoebox soup.

Tequila, Cointreau, lime juice, salt

without a trace of Pittsburgh.

Dance away, dance away, dance away
my Margarita, my Rita Hayworth.

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KEN NORRIS

MY NEW MEXICO

It was outside Taos somewhere,
a fledgling commune: Morning Star.
I was sleeping in the tool shed
by night, and in the daytime
I was making adobe bricks,
Hebrew style. A life of mud
and straw, and a dream of equality
that was, in no way, equal.

As usual, I was the stranger.

You hitch a ride down a road
and wind up here. Albuquerque
wasn't to my liking.
I'd wend my way home east
soon enough. An aching knee
reminds me.

In bondage
to what, slaves
to what idea? Ideal living,
bourgeois dreams of plenty.
I was in mud up to my ass,
red clay. I'd be washing it
out of my hair for weeks.

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red clay. I'd be washing it
out of my hair for weeks.

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NOBODY'S CHILD

Young and artistic and indestructible.

Put that in the end of life obituary.

The law couldn't touch us at all.
And we were perfect orphans,
nobody's children.

Came to the city to cause mayhem,
bringing the curtain down on the past.

Nothing was real until we felt it for ourselves.

Recreated art
in the image of our living,
casting indescribable shadows.

It's time to sweep up
the remains of the party.

Time to vanish into history.

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CHATTY CATHY

When I was young, I never played with dolls.
Now in middle age, I've suddenly inherited one—
an old Chatty Cathy, though the pull string that
protruded out of her back to make her talk is missing.
Her once beautiful, voluminous skirt shows clear
signs of water damage.
Her long, gleaming hair is matted.
She's still got that painted on smile, though,
but it's only skin deep. I know that inside—
if she had a "real" inside—she'd be pretty messed up,
likely on a fast track to teenage delinquency.
I check her arms for needle marks or self-cutting.
Nothing, just a strange coloured mark on her upper
right thigh. Glad I never had a daughter to raise,
a son was bad enough, but a girl can get into
such trouble, so easily taken advantage of, then
bearing the price, bearing the unwanted child,
who would always only get a second-hand doll,
probably a lot like this one.
A child who would turn silent, with not even
anyone there to pull the string
to try to find out what she really had to say.

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TRAPPED

Elizabeth May Isherwood had just come out of the closet, announcing to her husband and police colleagues she was gay, when weeks later she found herself in another—closet that is.

Getting up at night in her rented condo she took a wrong turn and ended up in the tiny laundry room, not the bathroom. The doorknob fell off, leaving her alone, naked and unable to get out.

Despite her ingenuity, she only made matters worse. Grabbing hold of a shelf, she swung it to make a hole in the wall, but hit a pipe which burst, spraying cold water everywhere.

For 24 hours she banged, thumped and shouted for someone to help. Finally losing strength and no doubt hope, she slumped down and succumbed to death from hypothermia.

Neighbours said they heard sounds, but decided it was only workmen making repairs. How often we do this—explaining away the bothersome noises of women who are trapped.

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ANGELA LEUCK

WHITE

The girls from the reserve were big.
They were often held back a year or two at school,
so they seemed like giants: tall with powerful thighs
and upper arms and rapid fists. We stayed clear of them.
It wasn't that we were prejudiced like our parents.
If they had lived on our street, we would have been friends.
But they came from the reserve where none of us ever went.

One day after lunch, waiting in line for the school doors
to open, I noticed one of the girls from the reserve
grinding something beneath her foot. Leaning closer,
I saw it was a small, coloured disk, the kind from
the watercolour sets we had in our desks.
She dropped one after another,
red, blue, brown, yellow, orange, purple, …
bringing her heel down, slowly pulverising
them into powder on the gray cement.
When the doors finally opened, we filed in
past the smeared rainbow on the ground.

When I got to my desk, I checked for my own paints.
I opened the thin metal case. They were gone.
I didn't complain to the teacher. I wasn't angry or hurt.
I knew that all those colours were so carefully and
completely crushed because I was White.

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ты иди, девочка! YOU GO, GIRL!

At 16, Svetlana Savitskaya snuck out to parachute without
her parents' knowing. When her father found out, he—
the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Soviet Air Defense—
slapped her on the back and roared: "You go, girl!"

By her 17th birthday, the soft-spoken Sveta had made
450 jumps. The next year saw record-breaking stratospheric
dives, as she plummeted from 14,250 meters—nearly out of this world!
In certain circles, she became known as "Miss Sensation."

No surprise that when she graduated from high school, she
enrolled in the Moscow State Aviation Institute. At 22, slim and petite,
a pretty brunette with bangs, she became a certified flight instructor.
She set her sights even higher: to become a world class test pilot.

Her record of 2683 km/hr in an MIG-21 remains unbroken.
Her star rose even higher when, at 32, in a Yak-18, she won
the women's world aerobatic championship in Britain
—modestly accepting the award in a dress she'd sewn herself.

Then, in 1980, she was chosen for cosmonaut training and
four years later blasted off from Baikonur to rendezvous
with two male colleagues aboard the Soyuz space station. They
greeted her with an apron and asked: "What's for dinner?"

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Sveta quickly established "a working professional relationship."
but not before accepting a bouquet of flowers grown in orbit.
On her next mission, two years later, she rolled up her sleeves
(so to speak) to cut and weld metal—the first woman to walk in space.

Plans for an all-women Russian crew led by Sveta to celebrate
International Women's Day kept being put off. It was finally
cancelled when Sveta became pregnant—she wasn't to be the first
mom in space—that was an American, Anna Lee Fisher.

Now, in her seventies and retired, does she stare up at the
heavens, think if they offered her a one-way trip to Mars,
she'd take it. Why not—as long as they didn't hand her a
broom and expect her to sweep up all that dust!

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WRITER'S LAMENT*

I could have been a Blues
contender!

A funky harmonica-howler
tapping salt from
my tin-plated shaker
on the Big Slug's tail,

a cool downchild, blowing about
bughouses, clip joints and train hopper's liberty.
--Joy and despond beyond compare!

Oh Sonny Boy!
Oh Little Walter! Snooky Prior!
Junior Wells and Paul Butterfield!
Great pantheon of Blue!

Oh poor subway strap hanger,
me!

--A scribbler in day-job beige,
a down in the mouth wannabe!
Oh me!

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But in dreams, zoot-suited,
full pleated,
pretty gal-treated,
Blues-rooted,
executing the deep bends true.
Oh, lift off this roof!

*An earlier version titled "Blues Funk" appeared in *Luna Moth* (DC Books, 2004).

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STEVE LUXTON

"GOT MY MOJO WORKING, BUT..."

Back then, the famous Blues lament wailed
at me in a beer-splashed, Spadina Avenue tavern.
I was a fresh migrant, not come north from
steamy Mississippi cotton flats, but south
from Toronto's suburbs by downtown bus.

Up on stage, the performers included
a harmonica player, belting out accompaniment
to Muddy Water's great song. –Like myself,
just a kid, though with a big
head-start at acting "cool."

'Cause he could play! –Suck and blow that
thing like a twelve bar Rimbaud. Whoa!
I sure wanted to be like him, so smooth and world-weary.
--Maybe even a match for the dude who stole
legendary bluesman Robert Johnson's Willie Mae!

With his harp, I figured he could have
it all. –The guys buy him drinks and the girls
swoon. Good times—blue heaven!
But, then again, maybe not....
It's a pretty tricky world. A great act, they say,

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will often get you a big act.
And what does Muddy lament? "I got my mojo working, but
it just won't work on you!" Nothing doing!
There's no charm or song, I'd learn,
that sweeps all the snags away.

The years brings the Blues.
Still, now and then, I pull out my harp, and, sure,
the World doesn't come hurrying,
but I find a little comfort when Life, that web-handed
lead guitar, once again gets it all wrong.

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STEVE LUXTON

Harmonica Bum

Under a sputtering streetlamp, by
a manhole, he chews winter wind,
puffs a raw solo.

He's a hand-to-mouth nomad
scantily wrapped in sewer steam,
and his low-down, tear-away sound.

There but for God's grace go I.
Nearly did....

If I'd my harp with me, I'd join in:
two lamp-flung shadows
shaking out a mean tune.
.
Instead, I dig him
some coin.

From his stack of frayed collars, he grins,
takes his iron, blows a lick
that grabs my ear,

swirls me with him
down the wind-tunnel
of a near bottomless Blues bend.

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LISTENING TO PAUL BUTTERFIELD'S "THE THRILL IS GONE"

Butter, your masterful licks in the sweet,
forlorn key of D, with their warbling, heart-wringing wails
collapsing into superlative sobs, reassure me

that for you the thrill wasn't entirely gone, despite
the drink and drugs puffing your gut and congealing your voice.
I remember seeing you play in a small, half empty Brooklyn club,
taking a break at the bar. By then, you were a case: a swaying,
blue-lipped woebegone on the fast track to routine Rockstar "accidental overdose"
—the saddest song!... When it came time for you to mount the stage again,

I hurried over, afraid you'd fall. But, staggering, you waved
me back, climbed up alone, and blew "The Thrill Is Gone".
It was a shimmering, unforgettable, righted wrong. Still is!

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EARRING BLUES

They float almost neglected
on a wooden rack in the bedroom
while hands reach for green glass on gold wire
white spiralic shells, discs of abalone
strands of malachite chips from Taos
a pair of blue clay horses
fire opals from down under
ancient resin of amber, yellow and orange
ginko leaves in gold, leaves of carnelian
leather moons, grapes of amethyst
moon stones for comfort
crystal drops gleaming rainbows
Celtic dogs on metal squares
golden goddess profiled on coins
From Mexico, silver netting and
drops of blazing blue-green.
From Africa, pink and black bead clusters.
The silver singleton feather so light
paired with turquoise oval.

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These days, earrings put aside, too
bothersome to struggle with elastic strands
of masks that pull down lobes, adornment
dropped, and for how long?

Why bother?
Because we're human, enjoy
lips, eyes and ears displayed,
yet hope to live safely beyond
this time, earth elements and
craft giving joyful refuge.

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CLAUDIA LAPP

HUBBUB

In a poor Imitation
of Quan Yin
my skinny arms flail
in vain attempts to complete
every task I claim, all at once,
every now and then glimpsing
She who dwells beyond calendars,
unfettered by the fears that push
my urgent buttons.

At the center of hubbub
her multiple arms open,
still as fan blades in a hot kitchen.
Whether she sits lotus on a rock or
resides in a cave, extends a willow branch
or rides a snow lion into hell realms,
her magic matches hummingbird wings.

Hearing the cries of Mother
and all Beings, she blesses
the impossible phenomenal
World.

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CLAUDIA LAPP

DREAM CHILDREN

All dressed up in two rows,
six girls and boys on wooden chairs:
I watch them from my kitchen as
they wait, ready to recite
their poems to invited guests.

Seated very still each child
holds at chest level a yellow blaze
of small birthday candles.
This is *their* day and the party
is happening at *my* house.
Soon adults will arrive, hungry
for infusions of unbounded energy.

I roll out balls of chestnut flour
for cookies, kids restless for sweets.
Fragrance drifts from the oven.
We festoon an archway with crepe paper.
The guests are late. I press small hands
into wet clay or onto thick paper, fun
of leaving marks, choosing colors for glaze.

The spirit of my ringtail cat arrives
his plump face and cinnamon ears
mingling with children who stroke
the softest fur ever, a flood of silly songs
and meows tumbling from open lips.

Who needs grown-ups to spoil our glee?
Let's make a ruckus and eat butter cookies
while poems take shape in our hearts.

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TOM KONYVES

TAKE BINGO FOR EXAMPLE

Just try saying there is no one there
Grind your teeth into the tiny squares
Tiny empty squares that say
in a totally unambiguous way
a perfect way to the truth
where there's no doubt that it
happened

or not.

BINGO TAKE TWO

If you're not the one
who invented the rolling train
or the tracks it rolled on
or even the steam whistle
that stopped you in your tracks

hold on to your seats!
buckle up!
it's going to be a rough ride
to the other side
of the pleasure dome

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AUSTIN HUMMELL

HERE'S THE THING

It's no fun to talk to angry people
cause you never get to talk. Sock puppets
are not people but better listeners for sure
than dentists. If someone stuffs a sock
in your mouth it usually means
they're mad at you. Sometimes means
your hands are tied to a chair
and the guy looking down at you
has more to talk about. Like a dentist.
It's his vacation. His problem with insomnia.
His brand new precision-milled putter. If only
he could putt he wouldn't grit his teeth
when he talks. Wouldn't pretend
that this was his smiling face.

Better him than me
is not a nice thing to think, I know.
But every thirty seconds there is somebody
somewhere with his feet nailed to the floor, thinking
I want my mullet back, thinking
for me to cheat it would have to be somebody else's idea.
I know I shouldn't have eaten the taco.
Of course it's hard to scream when there's something stuffed
in your mouth. Here's the thing. Not much scares me.
Not much can scare a bat either.
Well, thunder maybe.

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AUSTIN HUMMELL

SIT IF YOU WILL

In Budapest the taxi drivers never honk,
the children are as silent as children get,
and the teenagers in the park whisper
while they tug wine straight from the bottle.
The sound inside the Green Sheep Bar
is like the low rumble of the stomach
of a modest man with 2 coats on. The choicest water
they call *still*, but the calmest of all
runs through the heart of a girl called Thea.
Say Thay ya. Pretend you don't know her. Pretend
you can't make it to the church where every hymn
begins with her. Sit in the pew of the train station
and listen for it. Remember the scent of her,
the leather belts in the street, the purses of sheep.

In Budapest the moonshine comes in pear
and cherry and skips off the tables
outside the cafes where inside they make
the face-punching stuff. God is it strong.
God isn't strong as it, nor does she boast such proof
of her existence. Any proof more than one
hundred must be bragging and is unlikely
to be flavored with fruit grown mainly on the plains,
the Great Hungarian Plains
to be exact, whence pear and apricot grow,
whence plum in abundance come to swell
and stock the bottled Brandy.

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AUSTIN HUMMELL

She's a fine girl. Serves a hundred drunks
a day. In Budapest the waitress warns you
with a hush when your decibels become
American. If she has to, she'll remind you
that the tables are hers, the palinka, hers,
and that she takes the Sabbath when she wants the Sabbath.
In Budapest none of us has a prayer
of being there. None of us can sing
through her the first damn thing about rage.

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AUSTIN HUMMELL

WHAT NOT TO WEAR

Your heart on a sleeve. A frown at Yuletide.
Spandex, anytime. The clothes you have worn
since you first got the job as crisis counselor
twelve years ago. Your friends try to tell you
the square-toed boot is dead, but you just shrug
your frumpy sweater and tuck your unbrushed hair
behind your ear. Which is what passes for styling now
that you have three kids and just enough time
to glance into the mirror with your face turned
to your good side. It's true. The Royal Ball has come
and gone. There's a guy sitting in a recliner
who says you look good in anything, which is sweet
but no help at all. What you need is a godmother,
or better yet a godmother's wand. Or best yet
a five-thousand-dollar credit line,
a bossy flat mate, and a friend who loves cashmere
as much as it is possible to love cashmere. So ok,
you agree to lose the lab coat, the old school
hip-hop jersey, the whole downscale thrift store
look. Denial is what got you in the chair.
It'll take a little silver ballet flat to get you out.

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AUSTIN HUMMELL

You dress for the job you want, not the job
you have. You dress for the cocktail you'd like to drink
after. And then maybe one night before midnight
it happens. Again. The change you live your life for.
The makeover. The Clean House. The period
after the period. Childbirth.
The pause. It's what men will never get
because it's not in their blood. You forgive them
when for two weekends in March they sit
in front of a sport they call the Big Dance.
You smile when the spit flies from their lips
as they tell you about the Cinderella team
from the east. Like it's their story,
the sweet, helpless things. The very boys
you or someone like you brought into this world
by dressing like this, and then undressing.

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ALAIN CUERRIER

DEUX HAÏKUS

1

La nuit dans l'écrit
Petits bonds d'obscur sur papier
Lumière tout autant.

Night in the written word
On paper, small obscure leaps
Light as well.

書き物をする夜
紙の上の、小さくおぼろげな跳ね
光もまた軽し

(Kakimonowo suru yoru
Kamino ueno, chiisaku oborogena hane
Hikarimo mata karoshi)

Japanese translation by Kuniko Fujita

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ALAIN CUERRIER

2

J'aimerais mourir
En sachant que mes paroles
Ont atteint le silence.

I would like to die
Knowing that my words
Have touched silence.

死ぬ時には感じたい
私の言葉が達した先は
沈黙だということを

(Shinu toki niwa kanjitai
Watashino kotobaga tasshita sakiwa
Chinmoku dato iukotowo)

Japanese translation by Kuniko Fujita

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LE HUBLOT DES HEURES

Tu rêves de villes que le temps
n'aura pas érodées, de forêts
qui dessinent des chemins vastes,

tu rêves, et sur la mer
les mâts des navires
rongent les pierres blanches,
la houle grignote le rivage,

tu rêves, mais l'aube tarde encore
à souffler sur les ruines,
les ombres se fracassent
contre la chair des maisons,
ébranlent la charpente fragile
des fenêtres par lesquelles tu vois
un peu d'espoir, crois-tu,

et comme lentement s'édifie un poème,
à l'intérieur de toi,
tu recueilles un à un ces lieux,
ces visages, tu touches à l'amour,
à tout ce qui peut encore être vrai
et beau, comme une promesse.

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HÉLÈNE DORION

La Terre, à peine visible
– l'aurions-nous oubliée –
par le hublot des heures,
sait-elle encore te rappeler
que tu n'es jamais
au-dessus de ce monde
qui avance maintenant
avec ses cassures irréparables,
– jamais tu ne seras
au-delà des vagues qui effacent
les pas humains, la beauté simple
des choses, et tu voudrais,
en cet instant où la Terre se retourne,
entendre souffler un vent oblique,
toucher du bout de ton âme
la peau fragile du temps, voir,
voir enfin s'ouvrir les ombres que l'on porte,
et comme un cœur, et comme un visage,
le monde reposer dans la paume de l'aube.

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THE WINDOWS OF TIME

translated by Jonathan Kaplansky

You dream of cities not eroded
by time, of forests
that form immense paths,

you dream, and on the sea
the masts of ships
gnaw away at white stones,
the swell chafes the shore,

you dream, but dawn still takes a long time
to blow upon the ruins,
shadows crash
against the flesh of houses,
rattle the fragile frames
of windows through which you see
a bit of hope, you believe,

as slowly as a poem is constructed
inside yourself,
you gather these places one by one,
these faces, you touch love,
everything that can still be true
and beautiful, like a promise.

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HÉLÈNE DORION

The Earth, scarcely visible
—have we forgotten it—
through the window of time,

can it still remind you
that you are never
above this world
that now advances
with its irreparable
breaks—you will never exist
beyond the waves that erase
human steps, and you would like,
in this moment when the Earth turns over,
to hear a diagonal wind blow,
touch the tip of your soul
the fragile skin of time, to see,
to see finally the shadows we carry open,
and like a heart, and like a face,
the world rest in the palm of dawn.

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SCHRÖDINGER'S CAT & PANDORA'S BOX

Old doctor Schrödinger
had become very enamoured
with his beautiful young neighbour,
Pandora.

He became determined to meet her,
and decided to give her a present,
to break the ice.

So one day,
he rang her doorbell,
with a beautiful
ornate wooden box
in his hands.

When she answered the door, he said,
"This is one of my famous
'thought-experiment' boxes.
Now it is yours, Pandora."

"Oh my!" she said,
"It feels like there is something in it!
What ever could it be?"

Schrödinger replied,
"Why it is my cat,
conveniently named:
Schrödinger's Cat!
While it is in this box,
it is both dead and alive
at the same time!"

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"Oh my goodness!" said Pandora,
"That is such a strange thing to say!
How ever can that be?"

"It's a quantum paradox,"
replied Schrödinger.

"Now I am so, so curious!
What ever does that look like?"
she asked.

But before Schrödinger could say,
"Once the box is opened,
it will be *only* dead
or *only* alive … ",
she snatched the box,
flung it open,
and looked inside!

"Oh yuck!" she said,
"This cat is dead!"

She thrust the box
back into Schrödinger's hands,
and slammed the door
in his face.

And that
is how
curiosity
killed the cat!

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MARC NERENBERG

SCHRÖDINGER'S CAT & PANDORA'S BOX

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JE ME SOUVIENS, I REMEMBER

I remember the first time I said yes, oui, j'ai dit oui!
Je me souviens de l'hiver d'hier et des printemps de demain.
I remember the morning I left with the wind at my back.
I remember the evening when Leonard Cohen brushed my hair with music.
Je me souviens the Hallelujah of arriving, a phoenix from the nightmare.
Je me souviens de mots étranges in my mother's mouth.
I remember the dead silence of a Sunday in October: « où il y a de la vie, il y a de l'espoir. »
Je me souviens de l'ébruitement des insectes du cœur sous la pierre des songes.
I remember the brute mean days of insects, the coarse slap of years, days' songs.
Je me souviens d'un goût d'étreinte et de vagues féroces que soulève le réel.
Je me souviens du cri d'alarme, ma mère en larmes, un gout de pluie, de non, de oui.
I remember the moon melting in tears, inking a love poem and disappearing.
Je me souviens the poet embracing the liquid air.
Je me souviens d'un mot qui s'appelle pourquoi.
I remember because it is human.
Je me souviens de l'humble paresse de l'ombre, de sa dignité de fougère.

Created & performed for The Sierra Poetry Festival April 10, 2021

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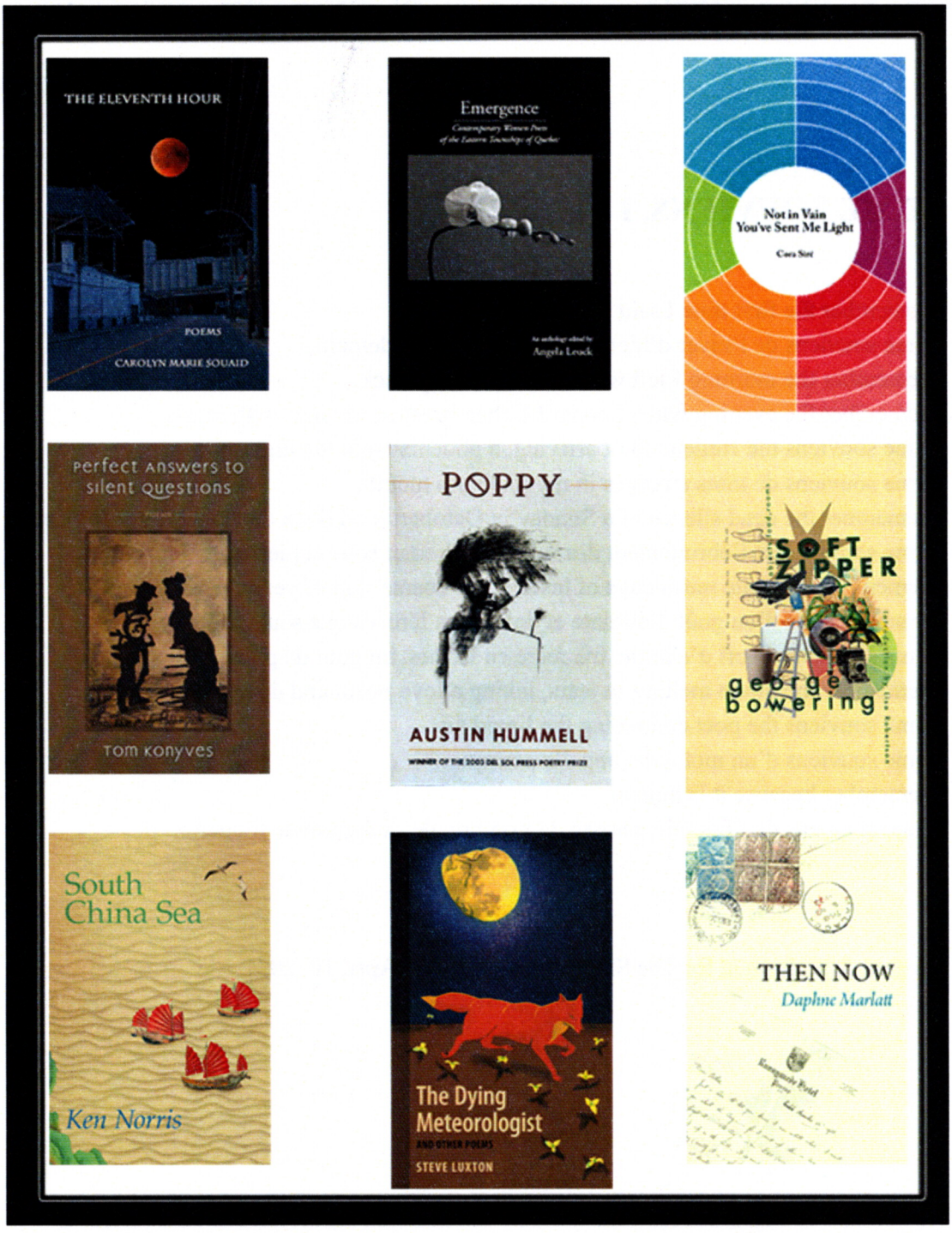
CONTRIBUTORS' RECENT BOOKS



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